

# Internal party democracy: the state of affairs and the road ahead

## Results of the mini-survey commissioned by NIMD Knowledge Centre

Prepared and presented by

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### 1. Introduction

This paper presents results of a survey on internal party democracy (IPD) undertaken by NIMD as part of its Knowledge Centre (KC) development. To put the discussion in context, the paper starts by restating the obvious: underscoring the relevance and centrality of political parties in contemporary democracies. It then highlights some of the key 'institutional preconditions' political parties need to develop and strengthen if they were to act out their roles effectively. One of these institutional requirements is IPD. The paper presents some conceptual considerations of this particular political parties' institutional dimension. The conceptual discourse mainly centres on the definition of IPD and the necessity for parties and their collaborators (partners) to pay special attention to this often glossed over aspect of political parties' institutional development. Having done this, the paper then recaps on the rationale behind the survey in question. The actual presentation of the results is preceded by a brief overview of the nature of political parties that participated in the survey.

### 2. Restating the obvious: Democracy and political parties

Although conceptually speaking, democracy continues to belong to the category of 'essentially contested concepts', in modern times, it is futile to labour oneself in defining this form of governance in the sense of the classical, Athenian concept which centred on direct democracy. The complexities of modern societies have made this (direct democracy) unattainable. Even Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's African deliberative democracy,-that of under the tree, where *people talk and talk until they reach a consensus*, (Erdmann, 2000) is not feasible as there is no single tree under which the entire population of a given country could sit. Modern democracy, as Samuel Huntington observes, "is not simply democracy of the village, the tribe, or the city-state; it is democracy of the nation-state and its emergence is associated with the development of the nation-state" (Huntington, 1991:13).

Thus, no matter how one defines today's democracy, one thing is clear: such a democracy will not be direct, but rather representative. As such, a contemporary democratic system requires intermediary actors between state and society as well as institutional mechanisms for the articulation and advocacy of diverse views and policy preferences. While civil society organisations have for some time claimed to be the rightful and legitimate 'middlemen,' it is now becoming axiomatic that in essence, political parties have a fundamental and indispensable niche in contemporary democracies. Indeed, "So fundamental are political parties to the operation of modern politics that their role and significance are often taken for granted" (Heywood, 2002:73). As a matter of fact, today's democracy is inconceivable without political parties, hence we talk of 'multiparty democracy'.

To be sure, the borderlines between political parties and other interest groups may in some instances be blurred if not conflated. However, what distinguishes political parties from any other political interest group is that it is only the former whose primary goal is that of contesting and capturing state power through peaceful means (Matlosa, 2007). It is also this very distinctive feature of political parties that makes them important institutions to reckon with in any democratic society. Because of what they are or what they are meant to be, they become the main vehicle for political representation, the main mechanism for the organization of government and the channels for maintaining democratic accountability.

### **3. Political parties and their required 'institutional guarantees'**

There are, however, a number of 'institutional guarantees' that these organised groups called political parties would have to fulfil if they were to effectively meet what is expected of them in a democracy. They include, among others, the following: (a) organisational strength, b) political identity, c) internal unity, d) electioneering capacity and e) internal democracy (NIMD, 2004).

In many cases, however, both the political parties themselves and their collaborators do not give adequate attention to a critical understanding of and reflection on the said institutional requirements. Often, there is just 'no time for these things' and yet they are the very basis for an effective and efficient organization that would have to be called a political party. They are also not often debated because these are 'household' matters as they touch on the internal workings of the parties. This perception poses a formidable challenge to well intended external actors that would wish to contribute to the democratization process as they are forced to delimit the scope of their support for fear of being red-carded on the grounds of 'interference'. The sensitivity that characterizes matters relating to political parties may also explain why for so long, the trend within the international community was that of 'treading carefully' on this dangerous political terrain. Unsurprisingly, political parties have been the late entrants in the democratization aid catalogue and this is after a stark realization that much as they are indispensable, they have for so long been the 'weakest link' in this democratization processes.

In both emerging and established democracies, however, partners in this field face the problem of knowing the state of affairs in as far as the various institutional guarantees for political parties are concerned. Part of the problem is the fact in many parts of the world, and particularly so in Africa, political parties are unfortunately the kind of institutions that have been subjected to far much less research in the democratisation field as it is only recently that they have started to become subjects of public discussion and explicit external support. As such, we lack comprehensive knowledge on what would constitute key dimensions of these institutional underpinnings. For this reason, any attempt that seeks to contribute to the deepening of any of these basic requirements (whether initiated by the parties themselves or by their collaborators) would have to be premised on a fair understanding of the political parties themselves. In other words, we need to understand the nature of these political parties and the context within which they find themselves as a starting point. Doing so, it is argued here, will help both the parties and their partners in addressing the gaps that may exist.

#### **4. Internal party democracy: the conceptual question**

Intra-party democracy is simply democracy within the party. What this means is that we can possibly better understand what intra-party democracy is, or what it entails if we were to explicate the term 'democracy' as it is commonly applied in contemporary literature. In our case, we can draw insights from Robert Dahl (1971) who views democracy<sup>1</sup> as a political system in which those who govern are continuously responsive to the preferences and aspirations of those who are governed. Of course, Dahl is mainly concerned with democracy in a society as a whole. However, his definition of democracy is still applicable to aiding our understanding of intra-party democracy particularly if we were to consider that the party leadership or executive is in a way analogous of government while the rank and file are an approximation of the citizens or the electorate. According to Dahl for a system to be qualified as a democracy, it would have to fulfil three fundamental conditions: Citizens should be able to formulate their preferences, express those preferences among themselves and also to the government, either as individuals or in groups, and those preferences have to be "weighed" equally "in the conduct of government" (Dahl, 1971:2).

Thus, to talk about internal party democracy is to refer to the extent to which a party subscribes to and abides by the basic and universal democratic tenets. Consistent with our conceptual framework, it means we are concerned for instance with the extent to which a political party has put in place and follows mechanisms that allow for the party executive to be responsive and accountable to its membership. It also means that in such a party, there is internal political contestation or competition and participation of the members in the affairs of the party. In addition, a democratic political party, like a democratic polity, should be able to be tolerant to and accommodative of divergent views within it. Thus, party discipline would not necessarily mean absence of what Scarrow (2005) calls an organized factionalism.

##### ***Internal party democracy: some caveats***

Of course, internal party democracy comes with its own challenges (cf. Intraparty democracy and its discontents in NIMD, 2007, Background reading. NIMD Partnership Days 10-14 September 2007). Uncontrolled factionalism, in the name of intra-party democracy may threaten the very survival of an emerging and fragile political party. Similarly, while parties naturally have supporters, it is sometimes difficult to identify actual party members beyond those who hold positions particularly in situations where data on membership hardly exists or is not as reliable. In that case, it becomes difficult to know to what extent there is popular participation in party's affairs. In addition, where there are very weak legal instruments governing the operations of political parties, there are no effective or adequate safeguards that would ensure that parties abide by what they profess. Motives of party membership may also have an impact on the extent to which a party may be seen to be inclusive or not. Where individuals view parties as just a source of personal aggrandizement, political activism dwindles with the decrease in the likelihood that the party or party leadership will be able to provide the kind of material benefits that were expected. This is partly the reason why the trend in crossing of the floor, is often from opposition parties to the ruling parties for it is the latter that

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Dahl however prefers to use the term "polyarchy" to democracy, in an attempt to make a distinction between the ideal (democracy) and what in practice exists (polyarchy). In the long run, the more a polyarchy will satisfy the necessary conditions, the more it will approximate the ideal cum democracy. See Dahl, Robert (1971): *Polyarchy, Participation and Opposition*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

enjoy a comparative advantage in the extent to which they can offer some 'dividends' to their members. In this regard, some party members may not actively participate in party affairs not necessarily because there are no mechanisms to facilitate their participation. Rather, they may have given up simply because for them, it is like the cow is no longer producing milk. Furthermore, in some cases, lack of participation of certain groups like women in party affairs may not necessarily be an indication of an exclusive and hence internally not democratic party. It may actually be a reflection of cultural problem whereby in some cultural setups, women are generally discouraged to take up prominent roles in public life. Thus, just insisting on inclusion of women in political process without paying regard to the cultural dimension may therefore result in arriving at wrong conclusions.

Challenges also arise in situations where political parties revolve around dominant personalities who are either founders or financiers or both. In this case, it may be difficult to conceive of a possibility of the followers to demand accountability of such leaders. After all, these leaders are seen as the patrons of their followers for the latter depend on the former for favours or even the actual sustenance of the party itself. In other words, such 'parties' do not have members. Rather, they have 'subjects' and it is erroneous in the first place to expect subjects to demand accountability of their 'masters'. What is at stake in this case is not just the question of intra-party democracy but the very conceptual foundations of a party itself for unless the subjects turn into members and the masters become democratically elected leaders, that which exists may not qualify to be called a political party. In other words, the nomenclature would have to change and we may not have to talk about intra-party democracy for it is like looking for internal democracy in an absolute monarchy. From a practical standpoint, therefore, we would sequentially have to reform the absolute monarchy into a democracy (constitutional monarchy) in the first place so that we can then assess the progress being made in the internal democratization process.

These caveats notwithstanding, there is no doubt that democracy within the parties is important. If parties are building blocks of democracy, they cannot afford not to be democratic themselves for to do is a contradiction both in terms and in values. What the foregoing discussions foretells, however, is that we would have to be cautious in passing judgements when we examine data and information related to internal party democracy for there will certainly be more to what we see than what meets the eye.

## **5. The survey on internal party democracy and NIMD Knowledge Centre**

It is against the foregoing background that the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) using the questionnaire, which was first developed by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), came up with the idea of providing both political parties and those interested in supporting them with a diagnostic tool to reflect on democracy within political parties. The idea is not just to understand the current state of affairs but also (and more importantly) to identify areas of reform. Such reforms can be carried out either by the political parties themselves or in collaboration with their development partners like NIMD and others.

Internal party democracy has already been made one of the key themes that will be addressed by the Knowledge Centre (KC) that is being established at NIMD Headquarters. A network of experts and organisations working in this field has since been launched. This KC is aimed at providing political parties and organisation like NIMD with comparative information on the various aspects

related to development and strengthening of political parties as pillars of democracy. For the KC, this initiative is considered very important as it will facilitate knowledge sharing on this theme.

## **6. Results of the survey on internal party democracy**

The results of this survey are presented following the sequential order of the survey questionnaire itself. A brief overview of the political parties that participated in this survey is presented first followed by a presentation of results pertaining to internal structure/ election of leadership, policy development, membership. Thereafter, we turn to results on candidate selection, electoral campaigns, external relations and funding. The paper concludes by providing a very brief overview of what efforts parties are undertaking to address the gaps in IPD and the role external actors like NIMD may play in the reform process.

We understand that much as political parties are important institutions that attract so much public attention, they have at the same time a democratic right to privacy. To respect the principle of confidentiality that was made clear to all political parties, it will not be possible to name parties or individuals when we make reference to particular trends or practices. To recapitulate, our intention was to examine trends and to identify instances of best practice that might serve as examples for those wishing to engage in reform initiatives besides initiating debate on this very important but sensitive subject.

### ***6.1 Number and profile of participating political parties***

Questionnaires were distributed to all the invited political parties from the NIMD partner countries including the Netherlands. Unfortunately, only a total of ten political parties from five countries returned the filled in questionnaires. Their profiles and geographical distribution are presented in the table below.

Region	No. Of parties	Formation				Existence of ideology		Ideological orientation on the left-right continuum						
		Before 1900	1900-1944	1945-1989	1990-2007	Yes	No	Far left	Left	Centre left	Centre	Centre right	Right	Far right
Europe	3		1	1	1	3			2				1	
Latin America				2		2			2					
Southern and Eastern Africa	2				2	2			1	1				
West Africa	3			1	2	1	2		1					
Total	10		1	4	5	8	2		6	1			1	

Table 1: Geographical distribution and profile of political parties that responded to the questionnaire

### *Ideological orientation*

As the table illustrates, of the 10 participating parties, 50% of them could be regarded as the oldest having been formed between 1900 and 1944 (one party) and 1945-1989 (four parties). Eight of the ten parties identify themselves with a particular political ideology, of which, is a rightist conservative party, another one is centre right while the rest are more to the left of the ideological continuum.

### *What triggers formation of parties*

With regard to reasons leading to their formation, a closer analysis of the parties that responded to the questionnaire shows that except in the case of some parties in Europe, many of the political parties were either National Liberation Movements (NLM) that drew their legitimacy and support on the quest for independence- those formed before 1990, (cf. Suttner, 2004) or they were protagonists of democratic change (those formed after 1990). The first category of parties fought against the colonialists while the second category fought the first, after they (NLM) had turned themselves into autocratic regimes. In addition, there are also parties that have been formed as a break away from another after failing to resolve differences. One party in Southern and Eastern Africa, for instance, reported that since its formation in 1990s, it has 'given birth' to five other parties. Of course, the question is why too many splits and whether these splits can be an indicator of internal party democracy or advancement of political pluralism. These questions are beyond the scope of this survey although they are worth reflecting on.

## **6.2 Internal party structure and election of party leadership**

### *Existence of rules and regulations*

If there is anything that political parties have in common, then it is the way they are structured. All the political parties in question indicated that they have written rules and regulations that govern their internal functioning as political parties. Key among these written rules is the constitution. Some parties do have also statutes or codes of conduct to regulate behaviour of either the leadership of the parties or, in some instances, the general membership. These written and formal rules and regulations also include those that govern elections of either party leaders or party's candidates for elections.

### *Decision making structures, how they are constituted and frequency of their meetings*

The highest body in terms of decision making in all the political parties is the Congress/ Convention/ General Assembly. Composition of this body varies from one party to the other although the general trend is to be as inclusive as possible. Inclusivity here is to be understood to mean participation of a wide range of party delegates from all different layers (either geographical: district, regional/provincial or according to societal strata: women, youths, professional affiliations etc). Frequency of meetings of this body also varies. Four of the ten parties indicated that their congresses are convened annually while the others indicated that they meet every five years (1 party), every 2 years (2 parties), every 4 years (2 parties) or in less than a year (one party). Except in the case of one party, decisions of the congress are said to be binding on the executive. In the case of that one party, congress decisions are only advisory on the executive.

Most of the senior positions in the parties interviewed are elective. This is particularly the case with regard to National Executive Committees or National Management Committees and other regional or district committees. Procedures for electing party leaders do differ among the parties but the most common system is the simple majority system. Only two parties said that they demand an absolute majority (50%+1) for the post of party president. In the case of national leadership positions, including the presidency, it is often the congress or convention that elects the leaders. Only one party indicated that in the event of having more than one candidate for the post of president, the entire party membership participates by way of a referendum.

Three of the ten parties interviewed have special quotas for women in their party structures with two of them (one from Africa and another from Europe) setting their quotas as high as 50%. Quotas for youths and other 'special' groups are either recognised informally (in 5 of the ten parties) or do not exist at all.

### **6.3 Policy development**

Almost all parties have either specialised committees or think tanks that take the lead in policy development. The committees have access to and make use of surveys and opinion polls among other sources of information and data. The difference is in the approving authority. In some political parties, the policy document requires the approval of the entire party congress for it to be adopted as a party document. In other parties, it is only the party's national executive or national board that has the final say.

All the parties have mechanisms in place to ensure accountability of the party leadership on policy issues. These are either contained in the party's constitution or they have special committees (Disciplinary Committees). One African political party indicated that in some instances, the party's congress may even pass a vote of no confidence in the party's leadership while another party noted that they have an expulsion clause in their statutes which can be evoked when need arises.

### **6.4 Membership**

#### *Existence of mechanisms for registration of party members and criteria for membership*

Results of this survey show that with the exception of one party, all the other parties do have a national membership register. Some parties do also have membership registers at a regional or district level. Membership is generally open. The most common restriction is age as many of the parties accept party membership applications only from adults (from 16 or 18 years and above). Most accurate and possibly reliable statistics on actual members a party has is hard to come by. Only those parties in Europe demonstrated to have a well established (and computerised) system of keeping and updating membership records. Even more difficult is to establish a percentage of women members a political party has.

#### *Membership rights and obligations*

In all political parties, members are expected to make contributions. These are often fixed minimum annual monetary fees. In addition, members are expected to perform some voluntary work for the party and adhere to the party's statutes or rules. In return, some parties have cleared laid down members' rights in form of voting rights at party meetings. Like in the case of members of the

various committees, the results further show that political parties do also have ways and means of disciplining members. However, none of the parties seems to have put in place formal or written guidelines for party members to express their opinion on party matters other than through their elected representatives during normal meetings.

#### *Internal communication*

The results on membership further show that political parties strive to establish possibilities for the various party structures (national, regional, and local) to communicate with their membership and vice versa. The most preferred or used methods are meetings (top-down) while individual correspondences (whereby the party leadership is writing the individual members or the other way round) are very rare. Use of electronic communication (website or e-newsletter) is also used but this is largely limited to parties in Europe. One party did even indicate that they have over 450 websites for local branches and they also make use of a membership restricted website at all levels.

### **6.5 Electoral Activity: Candidate Selection and Campaign**

#### *Formal requirements for candidature*

With regard to selection of candidates, this study shows that in all the parties, those interested to stand for any position would have to fulfil a number of requirements. This applies to all types of elections. Most demanding requirements concern party presidential elections. In this regard, most common requirements include age (often not less than 35years), education qualification and long standing party membership. In one party, a candidate is also required to have a least 200 signatures of the party members. For the other positions (Candidacy for Member of Parliament, Senate or Local Government), similar requirements also apply but the threshold is reduced. Age limit is often set at a minimum of 21 years and signatures, where they are required are also reduced as compared to those contesting in presidential elections.

#### *Vetting or screening of candidates*

It would also appear that there is a tradition of vetting candidates in all the political parties. Even when a candidate has fulfilled all the requirements, many political parties have established 'screening' processes which are either done at the NEC or Congress level. This screening process may even include conducting of interviews. What could not be deduced from results of this survey is how transparent is this screening process and also what happens in situations whereby the decision of the vetting authorities differ with that of the aspirant and/or the membership. Experience in some countries shows that these incidences contribute to party splits or the rise in independent candidates, where this is possible.

#### *Other decisive factors*

It is worth pointing out here that in countries which follow the first-past-the-post single member constituency system, in addition to the basic requirements mentioned, candidate's wealth is also an important factor that determines one's candidature as they (aspirants) have to either pay a fee to the party or they also have to campaign as an individual. Furthermore, the position one has in the party is said to also increase the chances for one's candidature just as it is also important in some parties to be 'well known' to the senior party leaders. Primary elections are also used but this was

mentioned by only one party. There are no term limits for one to contest as a candidate for his or her party. The only exception here is in those countries where they have term limits for the country's president.

#### *Inclusivity of candidates*

Like in the case of elections for positions within the party, quotas for either women or youths are not a common phenomenon among the political parties that responded to the questionnaire. Only one party indicated they require that at least 30% of their candidates are women. In another party, they have an internal informal understanding that there should always be at least 50% of women candidates. Interestingly, although this is not legislated, the party claims to have always achieved this without problems. Other than having quotas, a number of parties (four) noted that in they do take special measures in form of training for women and youth candidates.

#### *Election manifestos and campaign strategies*

Nine of the ten parties interviewed acknowledged that they have election manifestos. These, like in the case of party policies, are developed by a select committee acting on behalf of the party's national executive. Almost all the parties do also have a campaign strategy although it was difficult to decipher from the responses as to how in practice such a strategy is developed. All the party candidates are expected to take part in the campaign. In countries which follow the FPTP single member constituency, candidates also expected to campaign for themselves in addition to campaigning for the party (most likely for the party's presidential candidate). Very few (only 2 of the 10) parties said they undertake non-partisan voter education during their campaigns.

### **6.6 External relations**

It may not be some thing that is directly related to internal party democracy but still, the party's interactions with other actors beyond itself may have an influence particularly in terms of learning from others or in reaching out to others. This part of the survey was particularly interested in establishing the extent to which parties interact with international party networks, sister parties, international organisations, electoral management bodies, civil society, including the media.

Half of the parties indicated that they are affiliated to the international party networks (liberal international, etc). Of these 50%, only one party is from outside Europe. In terms of forging relationships with 'sister' parties, again half of the parties said they have such relationships. Unlike in the case of affiliation to international party networks, here, 3 of the five are parties from Africa. With these sister parties, the nature of relationship includes fundraising, exchange of experiences, policy support and training. Some (50%) of the parties do also have contacts with international organisations and party foundations particularly NMD and the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). Few (4) parties indicated that they have formalised cooperation arrangements with other parties within the country of which one has been facilitated by NIMD.

Electoral management bodies, where they exist, play a very crucial role in the life of political parties. Not only are they responsible for management and administration of elections, of which political parties are the main players, but they (electoral bodies) do also have in some instances, legislative oversight function over political parties. In the case of the political parties that participated in this survey, two indicated that they have formalised relationship with their respective electoral bodies

whereby they have party representatives in the said body. Other parties have either no relationship at all with electoral bodies in their countries (3 parties) or their relationship can be described as informal (3 parties).

From the results of this survey, it would appear that political parties do not have much formal interactions with civil society organisations in their respective countries. This is evidenced from the fact that of the ten political parties interviewed, only one party (from Africa) has formal cooperation with civil society organisations in its country. Some European parties noted that although they do not have special or formal relationships with civil society organisations, they do interact informally with particularly those organisations that are dealing with issues that are of interest to the respective political party.

### **6.7 Funding**

Our main interest in this section of the survey was to establish the sources of funding that the various political parties have and how those funds are utilised and accounted for. This was against the already pointed out assumption: the way a party is financed may have significant influence on the internal functioning of the party including the extent to which democracy within the party is practiced.

#### *Sources of funding*

With regard to actual sources of funding, the results of the survey show that political parties have varied experiences. In some countries, political parties do have access to state funding as it is the case in eight of the ten parties (coming from three of the five countries). In the case of one political party in Africa, this state funding constitutes about 90% of the funding base that party has. In the other two countries, political parties do not have access to public financing.

Other than being financed from the state coffers, another important source of revenue for political parties is membership fees and donations. In some instances, however, the amount of membership fee being levied is so little as to warrant this (membership) to be a source of funding to reckon with. For instance, on political party in Africa charges its members an annual fee of as low as an equivalent of 0.094EUR. In that case, it can be said that the membership fee is more of a symbolic gesture on the part of the members to express their affiliation to that particular party than the intention of contributing to the survival of the party as such.

Thus, it would appear that it is mainly donations (and this is particularly the case in Africa) that constitute the main financial base of the party apart from the state funding. These donations are coming in different forms. Some of the donations are voluntary contributions that individual members, often those in leadership positions, are making either to a particular party function or to a party more generally. In some parties, members are obliged to make donations if they have to be endorsed by the party to stand as a candidate. For instance, in the aforementioned party that charges only 0.094EUR as an annual membership fee, those who wish to contest, on behalf of the party as an MP are required to pay the party an equivalent of EUR28.55 while for those aspiring for local government positions (councillor) they would have to pay EUR9.52. However, while some parties require their candidates to pay some of form of a 'nomination fee' none of the parties interviewed requires that their respective candidates raise a specified amount of money to finance

the campaign. There are also no limits with regard to the amount of money candidates or parties may spend on their campaign. As another way of raising funds, some parties require that those members who are serving as cabinet ministers or MPs do also make some financial contribution to the party. It is not clear, however, as to whether this contribution is a percentage of their monthly salary or not.

#### *Expenditure pattern and financial accountability*

With regard to the expenditure pattern, it would appear that much of the money that political parties raise or receive is spent on campaigns and salaries for the administrative staff and other salaried party positions as the case may be. Accounting for these expenses varies from one party to the other. In some instances, political parties are required to submit financial returns to public institutions. This could be either to an electoral management body or to the Ministry of the Interior. This is, however, a rare phenomenon as it happens only in two of the ten countries that participated in this survey. What seems to be a tradition in as far as financial accountability is concerned is the submission of financial reports by the relevant authorities in the party to the party's annual congress or convention.

#### **6.7 Efforts to improve internal party democracy and the role of external actors**

All the political parties indicated that they are undertaking 'various efforts' to address the gaps in the state of internal party democracy in their respective countries. What could, however, not be clearly deciphered are the actual details of those 'various efforts' that are being undertaken other than training and more involvement of ward committees in candidate selection.

Except in the case of two political parties, there is some general consensus that external actors have role to play in addressing some of the challenges that political parties may face in trying to improve their state of democracy. Interestingly, even among political parties from Africa, direct funding as the top most priority of what external actors can do to assist in this regard was only mentioned by one of the five African parties. What was commonly requested -which of course may have an inevitable monetary implication- are issues like capacity development, long-term partnership, in-house training, and facilitation of exchange of information and experiences.

## **7. Conclusion**

This paper has been an attempt to provide an overview of the state of affairs with regard to internal party democracy in the NIMD partner countries. Considered from the formal perspective, it would appear that political parties in all the partner countries of NIMD do have established systems, rules and regulation that would facilitate evolution of political parties that are not only professing democracy, but they are themselves democratic. However, there are still a number of gray areas that would need some attention. We would have to admit, in conclusion that perhaps the biggest challenge that parties face in enhancing internal party democracy is not the intention to do so as manifested in the formal requirements that are easily fulfilled, but rather it is the actual practice of walking the talk. In other words, going beyond the letter and rhetoric and living by what is claimed is the biggest challenge. That calls for a willing and reform mindset not only on the part of the parties that have to implement the necessary reforms, but also on the side of those who have an interest in supporting those reforms for the process may, in some instances call for 'unorthodox' *modus*

*operandi* that may for instance include introduction of a funding criteria that takes into account the need for parties to be democratic. As democracy is about values, developing indicators for internal democracy, particularly if those indicators would have to be part of a partnership benchmark, would require an open and frank debate that takes into account the varied contexts under which individual political parties operate.

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